



Department  
for Education

# **TACT Peterborough**

**Early evaluation report**

**February 2020**

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## Summary

Peterborough City Council commissioned The Adolescent and Children's Trust Peterborough (TACT) to be responsible for permanency services in Peterborough for 10 years from April 2017. The Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme (the Innovation Programme) gave funding to support some aspects of TACT's service provision and the Department for Education contracted NatCen Social Research to evaluate the initial stages of the TACT commission.

In October 2019, TACT served notice of their intention to end the contract with Peterborough City Council to deliver their permanency service. As a result, the Innovation Programme funding ended and the evaluation ceased.

The evaluation aimed to understand how the TACT commission, including aspects funded by the Innovation Programme, affected a range of outcomes such as placement stability, how it might have achieved any impact and how it was received by carers, parents and staff in Peterborough. The evaluation involved collecting questionnaire responses from carers and analysing data on the number and type of placements and looked-after children.

The impact evaluation found little or no evidence of impact on the selected indicators during the 2 years of TACT provision for which data were available, either compared to Peterborough prior to TACT or to similar local authorities. There was a reduction in the proportion of care arrangements ceased that were ceased by children returning home, from 33% in 2016/17 to 20% and 21% in the two years of TACT's service provision. Knowing whether this is a 'real' sustained change requires longer term data, and the implications of such a change are not clear.

Drawing conclusions from the impact evaluation alone is difficult: for most indicators there was substantial variation in the period prior to the commission. A clear impact of the intervention outside the range of this 'background' variation could only be discerned from very large changes in values, or from longer time series of post-intervention data.

Carers taking part in the survey reported widespread satisfaction with TACT's service offer, particularly the training available. Many reported positive effects of TACT on aspects of their caring. There were different perceptions of what counted as 'TACT Peterborough' – ranging from all professionals involved in the service to just the management. While part of TACT's approach was to treat carers according to need regardless of legal status, some respondents commented on being treated differently compared to other types of carers under TACT's management, particularly with regard to pay and finances.

Unfortunately it was not possible to collect the richer qualitative data that would have been able to give insight to the processes as perceived by staff and carers, developing

our understanding of both the survey findings and of the stability and family-focused aspects regarding which the impact evaluation could not be conclusive.

# 1. Overview of the project

## Project context

Peterborough City Council (PCC) is a unitary authority in the East of England providing services to the city of Peterborough and its surrounding area ('Peterborough' for the purposes of this report). The population served by PCC was almost 200,000 in 2015.<sup>1</sup>

Between 2011 and 2019 the number of looked-after children (LAC) in Peterborough ranged between 310 and 370 (median: 355).<sup>2</sup> The number of looked-after children per 10,000 children under 18 was between 71 and 80 (median: 74), higher than England (median: 60) and East of England (median: 50) and 52<sup>nd</sup> highest of 152 local authorities (LAs) reporting to the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT).<sup>3</sup>

Peterborough was the first local authority in England to commission out its complete fostering, adoption and permanency service. These went to The Adolescent and Children's Trust Peterborough (TACT), which took on responsibility for these services on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 for a commissioned period of 10 years. Peterborough and TACT bid successfully for funding in Round 2 of the Innovation Programme, securing up to £1.2m over 3 financial years to support the innovative aspects of TACT's approach to the commissioning out of Peterborough City Council's fostering, adoption and permanency service. However, the partnership between TACT and Peterborough City Council came to an end in October 2019 and the permanency service transferred back to the Council. This followed a decision by TACT to serve notice of their intention to end the contract to deliver the permanency service in Peterborough.

## Project aims and intended outcomes

The TACT commission covered all permanency services for which PCC has a legal duty, in Peterborough and surrounding areas. TACT aimed to secure permanency for all children and young people in care, or who may become looked after by offering children and families equally high levels of assessment, preparation, training, support and review regardless of legal status. TACT implemented a range of activities to improve fostering, adoption and permanency services. These activities included: creating a single team, with each social worker having a mix of cases across fostering, adoption and special guardianship orders (SGOs); and ensuring that all carers receive the same, high-quality information about children and young people.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/council/about-peterborough/population/>

<sup>2</sup> LAIT 2019: Number of looked-after children.

<sup>3</sup> LAIT 2019: Children looked-after rate, per 10,000 children aged under 18.

The core aims of TACT's work were:

1. Increased stability in all placements, usually encouraging a higher proportion of looked-after children to remain in family homes or SGOs, including improving the support given to SGO carers to reduce chance of arrangements breaking down in years to come.
2. Improved educational, physical and emotional health outcomes for children.
3. Increased skills and confidence in the carer group and with staff to improve placement support.
4. Modelling good practice to other local authorities.

Within this wider scope of activity, the elements of the 3-year Innovation Programme-funded work, described in the next section, targeted the parent and carer groups that TACT support and were delivered by TACT staff, foster carers and social workers as well as external agencies. Funding was largely used to provide staffing and service time to develop the activities and the intention was to bed these into the normal service offer. This evaluation focuses on aims 1 and 3 of the above list, in line with the approach agreed during the scoping phase.

## Project activities

The activities TACT delivered supported by Innovation Programme funding aimed to boost the support carers, particularly foster and SGO carers, received in looking after children; to develop their skills; and to enhance their sense of confidence and wellbeing in the role. Some activities related to all carers (foster carers, adoptive parents, special guardians) while others related to specific categories. The activities included:

- As early as possible after referral by a social worker, family and potential carers or adopters were encouraged to attend **family group conferencing**, a formal meeting between TACT staff and family members regarding the care and protection of the child. The aim of this was to establish whether there are family members who could provide a home for the child.
- Looked after children for whom foster placements are sought had **strength based assessments** (rather than solely deficit-focused or problem-focused), to identify their strengths and interests, providing a better placement of the child.
- All carers were offered **mindfulness training** delivered by Adoption Plus in a group setting, and one-to-one and group **training in therapeutic crisis intervention** to handle traumatic experiences. All foster carers received support from experienced peers through **a buddy system**. Special guardians received **mediation training for contact** with the children's birth parents. Carers struggling with attachment difficulties were invited to **attachment support groups** run by the LAC Psychology service. Foster carers who faced an allegation made by a child

they care for were offered **bespoke allegation support**. These activities aimed to increase carers' wellbeing and feelings of confidence in their roles.

- TACT also encouraged the professional development of carers. Foster carers were offered training to deliver **parallel parenting** sessions with birth parents. The aim of this service was to teach birth parents play and boundary skills whilst their child is in care, which should help improve parenting skills, allowing the child to return to the care of birth parents. Experienced carers were also given the opportunity to be a buddy for new carers, or give allegation support. These services were intended not only to encourage carer development, but also to provide essential support to parents and children.

The project theory of change is in Appendix 1.



## 2. Overview of the evaluation

### Evaluation questions

The original research questions were:

1. What impact does the TACT commission have on outcomes for children and families in Peterborough? Specifically, how do their activities impact:
  - a. placement stability
  - b. educational, physical and emotional health outcomes for children<sup>4</sup>
  - c. the quality of care given to children<sup>4</sup>
  - d. the type and nature of support available to families<sup>4</sup>
  - e. children remaining in the care of family members, rather than foster or adoptive families, or returning home after a period of foster care<sup>5</sup>
2. In what ways do TACT's activities affect the skills and confidence of the carer group and with staff to improve placement support? In particular, how do new ways of working used at TACT affect the workforce?
3. What factors have influenced the implementation of TACT activities and what are the barriers and facilitators to the effectiveness of TACT's activities?
4. What are the costs and cost savings of implementing TACT's activities compared with 'business as usual' in other local authority areas?
5. What are the innovations in practice TACT are developing that are shareable with other local authorities?

### Evaluation methods

Prior to the closure of the project, the evaluation plan had 4 stages:

1. Scoping stage including theory of change development;
2. Impact evaluation: analysis of quantitative indicators relating to LAC in Peterborough, comparing the period of the TACT commission to both Peterborough in previous years and to similar local authorities and testing the degree of statistical significance. There is more detail in Appendix 2.
3. Process evaluation, comprising

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<sup>4</sup> No longer considered under impact – see below.

<sup>5</sup> Added following scoping phase.

- a. Two carer surveys (in May to June 2019 and January 2020) administered to all carers (N=284) by email and completed online and achieving a 25% response rate. The May to June 2019 survey instrument is in Appendix 3.
  - b. Focus groups, 1 with 8 to 10 staff and 1 with 8 to 10 carers;
4. Economic analysis.

Stages 1 and 2 were completed. The closure of the project meant the following changes in the evaluation approach:

- In stage 3, only the initial survey was conducted. We did not conduct the second carer survey or the focus groups with staff or carers. This was due to concern that the change of circumstances would be the predominant matter in the minds of respondents and would bias their perception of the service (including retrospective perception) and confuse the scope of what we were asking.
- We did not conduct the economic evaluation. This was because it was going to require the results of the process evaluation for drawing meaningful conclusions. This in turn was due to the limitations in the impact evaluation data (as described below under 'Limitations of the evaluation' and in Appendix 2).

## Scoping stage and changes to evaluation methods

The first stage of the evaluation involved investigating the theory of change underlying the project's work. This involved a workshop with senior TACT staff to discuss how the Innovation Programme-funded activities related to outcomes for children, families and carers, and impacts on a range of indicators. The logic model reflecting this exercise is in Appendix 1. The 3 overall aims of the Innovation Programme-funded activities in the TACT commission in Peterborough were identified as:

- More children remaining in the care of family members or returning home after being looked after, as part of an overall aim to achieve the right permanency option at the earliest opportunity.
- Improved foster or Special Guardianship Order (SGO) placement stability for looked-after children.
- Improved retention of foster carers.

As a result of this scoping stage we agreed not to consider evaluation questions 1b, 1c and 1d in the impact evaluation, as it was clear that the Innovation Programme-funded activities were too distant from these impacts, and that relevant indicators were not available. We considered introducing a question on foster carer retention, but no pre-TACT data on foster carer retention was available, meaning assessment of impact on this outcome was not possible.

We hoped to be able to respond to questions 1c and 1d (as well as 2, 3 and 5) in the process evaluation.

## **Changes to impact evaluation methods**

We had planned to use (comparative) interrupted time series (ITS) analysis for the impact evaluation – a method that would allow more robust detection of smaller changes, over time. In the early stages of the impact evaluation it became clear that the absence of trends in the pre-intervention period, and having too few post-intervention timepoints, meant we could not conduct ITS robustly. We also considered and excluded individual-level analytical methods (propensity score matching or difference-in-difference) as we did not have access to individual-level data.

A further consideration for our impact evaluation methods is that prior to 2018, the count data in LAIT are rounded to the nearest 5, which meant we could not accurately calculate proportional changes or confidence intervals around point estimates. We mitigated this by conducting sensitivity analysis as part of the impact evaluation comparing Peterborough with other local authorities.

## **Limitations of the evaluation**

The evaluation faced some limitations, related primarily to the data availability for the impact evaluation, prior to the project ending:

First, for most indicators in the impact evaluation, there was substantial variation in values in the pre-TACT period. This presents a fundamental limitation across impacts. This variation means that a robust quantitative assessment of impact requires several years of data to give a reasonable chance of discerning a trend despite this variation.

Second, even with a stable pre-intervention trend, as with the indicator on the proportion of children in the same placement for 2+ years, demonstrating impact is not straightforward. For example, not all children are equally easy to place and achieving stability may become disproportionately difficult the more children have been in 1 placement for 2+ years. Statistically discernible differences may therefore be difficult to achieve, even if real improvement is happening. In such a case the time series component is even more important, because a modest but sustained step-change increase, visible over a few years post-intervention would offer clearer evidence than an increase of the same size in only 1 or 2 years.

The absence of much of the process evaluation means that these limitations to the impact evaluation cannot be mitigated through investigating the intermediate mechanisms of impact such as the perceptions carers and staff have of how the service works to achieve its goals.

## 3. Findings

### Carer survey

#### Respondent overview

Of a total of 71 responses, almost all were from foster carers (37) or adoptive parents (25). There were 7 responses from special guardians or kinship carers with an SGO, and 2 from friends-and-family or other kinship carers. Over two-thirds (69%) had been carers for more than 3 years and 42% for over 6 years. Just over 1 in 4 (27%) had 1 child in their care, half (51%) had 2 to 3 children in their care and a further 1 in 4 (23%) were caring for 4 or more children. Adoptive parents were unsurprisingly more likely to have paid work outside the home than foster carers.

#### Carer self-assessment

We asked carers to reflect on the last month and rate their confidence and skill level at caring, how well they felt had supported their children (in general and with challenging behaviour or trauma) and how well they felt supported. Answers were on a scale from 1 (not confident, low skilled or poorly supported) to 7 (very confident, highly skilled or well supported).

Of the 71 responses, nearly half (49%) reported feeling very confident in their ability to parent or care for their children in the last month, and a further 40% reported confidence of 5 or 6 out of 7. Carers rated their skill as a parent or carer similarly with half (51%) reporting feeling highly skilled, and 91% reported feeling an above-average skill level.

All but 1 respondent reported feeling that they had supported their children well over the last month. This included 57% who felt they had dealt well with challenging behaviour (of 61 people who answered this question) and 46% who felt they had dealt well with trauma experienced by the child (of 54 people who answered).

By contrast, only 73% of respondents felt that over the last month they themselves had been well supported in parenting or caring for their children, while 15% felt below averagely or poorly supported, and a further 11% felt averagely supported.

We then asked carers 'In your opinion, what makes the most difference to your ability to care for the child(ren)?'. Sixty-five carers answered this question, and their responses fell into 3 main themes: support (both social and professional); parenting approach and personal circumstances; and education and training.

#### Social and professional support

Many carers emphasised how important it was to feel supported given the stress that they could encounter in their roles.

“Personal stress levels and having a support network. Feeling isolated as adoptive parents of children with challenging behaviour and additional complex needs.”

Respondents valued the professional support of TACT social workers and other professionals plus the contact with families organised through support groups:

“Being able to talk openly and without prejudice when you are finding it difficult.”

“During challenging times being able to make contact with the relevant organisations and being ‘heard’ and support gained.”

“The support groups that are run for adoptive families allow us to share and seek opinions of how to care for our child. We still have regular informal contact with our social worker through these groups which is invaluable.”

As well as the emotional support, carers emphasised the practical benefits of the support from TACT social workers.

“Respite when behaviours are challenging helps. Both the foster child and carers have time to have peace and builds resilience and other positive relationships if respite is matched correctly.”

Staff turnover and associated lack of continuity presented a challenge to this support:

“Consistency of social workers – it is very disruptive when we have SW's that leave just after they have met the children once or twice.”

One respondent felt that they had not received support from TACT and said that their “own resilience” had made the difference in caring for their child.

Carers reported that as well as relying on the support of others, they needed to take care of their own wellbeing and be able to turn to support from family or friends and services if required. Several respondents mentioned the importance of sleep, as well as other personal factors such as work stresses:

“Lack of sleep.”

“Having time, being well and rested and having the confidence of backup from services that understand us and trauma and attachment if needed.”

### **Parenting approach and personal circumstances**

Many respondents mentioned aspects of their parenting approach, and the importance of the relationship with their co-parent. Some aspects of parenting approach seemed to draw on training, such as “Using therapeutic parenting techniques” as well as

“Making sure the children have their routine.”

“Listening to their worries and to encourage confidence.”

“Being a partnership so workload can be split.”

## Education and training

Respondents mentioned the benefits of a wide range of education and training, as well as information on the legal and policy environment, including updates on practical issues such as benefits.

“[TACT] support the running of an adopter led group which is invaluable to our family. My children and I have received therapeutic Life Story work through TACT which has been helpful and contact arrangements which meet their needs have also had a significant positive impact on us all.”

Next we asked respondents “Please tell us any ways in which you would like to develop your skills as a parent or carer”, and 65 respondents answered.

There was simultaneously a widespread view that the training offered was sufficient and that people’s needs were met, and a desire expressed for a wide range of skills development. Some respondents reported having no particular needs that had not been met, while others expressed a general enthusiasm for training without identifying anything in particular.

“Specific training for situations as they arise is always welcome. I have completed a wide range of general training already. I don’t wish to foster any children with greater difficulties than our current foster child.”

Many carers mentioned specific challenges or areas in which they would like to improve their skills, sometimes explicitly describing a wish for formal training and at other times for more general development of skills. Dealing with challenging behaviour was mentioned repeatedly:

“We would love to find more ways of dealing with toddler tantrums and teenage attitude – especially when they are both happening at the same time.”

“Maybe more opportunities to reflect and be recognised how well we cope with challenges every day that we accept as normal.”

Many respondents wanted to know more about trauma and be better prepared to care for traumatised children. There was also some interest in therapeutic parenting techniques:

“More training on mental health and the impact of trauma. Therapeutic caring. Play therapy training.”

Carers wanted to know more about how to support children with a diverse range of atypical needs, including children with foetal alcohol syndrome, children with a need for Makaton or British Sign Language, and autistic children.

“Further development of skills around delivering Life Story work to children with additional needs including autism.”

There were also wishes for better general parenting skills, including around homework, hair and skincare and helping children to eat less fussily.

Several respondents mentioned the need for better accessibility of training and other activities:

“Peterborough TACT do offer lots of training on key issues with adoptive children however these tend to run during the working week. It would be great if some of this training could be evenings or weekends.”

“As a single parent it is difficult to have the time energy and money to take part in activities as a family.”

One foster carer expressed the wish to be involved in recruitment, while 1 adoptive parent mentioned their desire to share their experience to help others:

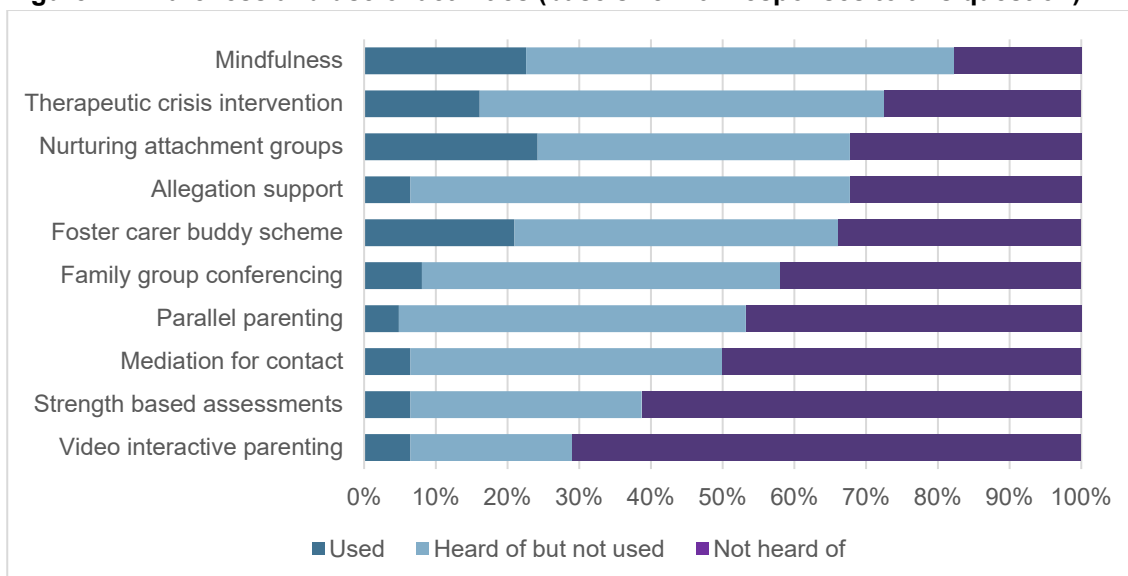
“Would like to be more involved with supporting new adopters, sharing our knowledge and experience.”

### Engagement with TACT activities

We asked respondents about their awareness of, interest in and use of 10 Innovation Programme-funded activities provided by TACT Peterborough. These included training activities (mindfulness, therapeutic crisis intervention, nurturing attachment groups, parallel parenting, video interactive parenting), on-the-job support (allegation support, foster carer buddy scheme, mediation for contact) and activities prior to children being placed (family group conferencing, strength-based assessments).

62 respondents gave details of their awareness and participation in activities provided by TACT, of whom 61% had used at least 1 activity. The activities most used were nurturing attachment groups (24%), mindfulness (23%), foster carer buddy scheme (21%) and therapeutic crisis intervention (16%) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Awareness and use of activities (base size = 62 responses to this question)**



Source: NatGen Survey of TACT Parents and Carers, 2019

We also asked why carers had not used activities they said they were interested in using and 59 respondents answered this question. The most common response was that they did not feel a current need (37%). Sometimes this was due to longstanding experience looking after children:

“Having brought up a family then fostered for years before adopting [...] I don't feel I need any help at the moment.”

Another common reason for non-use of activities, was that carers were not aware of or had not been offered the activity. Awareness of activities varied greatly, ranging from 82% of respondents having heard of mindfulness, to 29% having heard of video interactive parenting (Figure 1). Overall 21% of respondents reported that they had not heard of or not been offered an activity.

“I have used the buddy scheme and am attending Mindfulness but wasn't aware of the strength based assessment.”

“These have not been signposted to us or offered to us and we were not aware of these services prior to taking this survey.”

Of course, not all those who were not aware of an activity would have used it had they been aware. It is also important to note that some respondents reported using other parts of the TACT offer, and past and potential future use but not present use:

“We have used FGC in the early stages of SGO. We would contact TACT if require any other services as time goes by.”

Some of TACT Peterborough's activities were focused on those with less parenting experience, while other activities (such as strength-based assessments and family group conferencing) happened prior to or at the beginning of a placement. Given most of the participants in this study had been carers for at least 3 years these services may be less applicable.

Several respondents reported lack of time as preventing them taking up activities they would have liked to attend.

“Time. We work full time jobs.”

“For the mindfulness I couldn't get that time off work.”

One person reported that they “Don't find [the activities] helpful”, and 1 participant said they had not participated because they “Do not have any trust in TACT”.

Among those who said they had used an activity, there was wide variation in how many thought the activity was useful. Numbers were very small, but the picture was quite mixed – for family group conferencing and therapeutic crisis intervention most users reported finding the activities useful, while a minority of users reported finding mindfulness, the buddy scheme or nurturing attachment useful. These results are quite different from

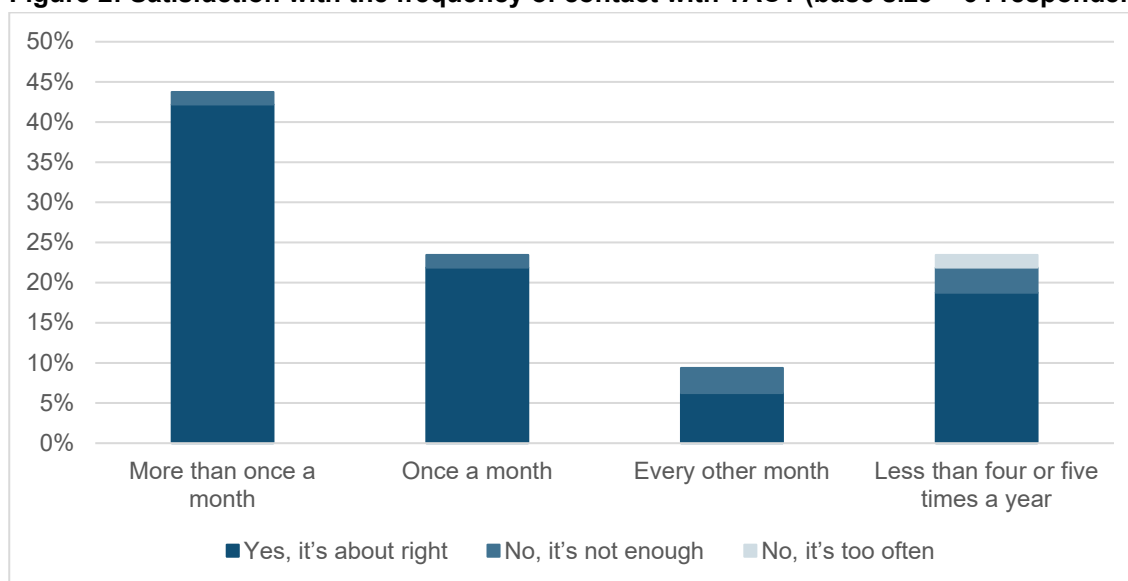


those previously recorded in the TACT Peterborough own foster carer survey, which found very high satisfaction with TACT’s training offer.<sup>6</sup>

## Contact with TACT

We asked respondents why they contacted TACT, how frequently they contacted them, and whether they were satisfied with this frequency of contact. 64 respondents answered these questions. Most respondents (67%) had contact with TACT (not restricted to the Innovation Programme-funded activities) at least once a month. The frequency of contact was similar regardless of the length of time carers had been in their role, or their self-reported level of skill or confidence. Nearly all carers (89%) were satisfied that they had an appropriate amount of contact with TACT, and 6 respondents felt it was too little.

**Figure 2: Satisfaction with the frequency of contact with TACT (base size = 64 respondents)**



Source: NatCen Survey of TACT Parents and Carers, 2019

Carers reported contacting TACT for a wide range of advice and services and activities, including support groups for adoptive parents and for foster carers. Practical support needs included payments, respite, accessing child benefit, citizenship, passports and bank accounts.

Carers mentioned seeking support from social workers, including relating to children’s Education, Health and Care Plans and Team Around the Child meetings, and dealing with other authorities. Carers also sought advice relating to their care, and some sought support from TACT when having difficulties with social workers themselves:

“For advice and support from skilled social worker post adoption. For back up when children's home authority proving a challenge to access support from.”

<sup>6</sup> *Highlights of the TACT Peterborough Carer Survey 2018*, TACT Peterborough 2018 (unpublished).

“If we had any concerns with regards to life story (it's a complicated one) and how to deal with it or if we had any concerns with regards to birth parents who are fairly local to us.”

“If I am not getting the support I need from a social worker, advice on what I need to do next.”

Many carers turned to TACT for unusually difficult behaviour.

“For emergency advice when an unusual incident or pattern of behaviour has taken place or when I feel the incident is beyond my experience.”

TACT also provided an important mechanism by which looked-after children could remain in contact with their birth and wider family. Several respondents mentioned letterbox contact:

“Social activities and letterbox contact.”

“Advice on handling parents and contact.”

Finally, some comments referred back to the previous theme of support. A carer appreciated their contact with TACT:

“Just to have someone to ask to about how I feel.”

## **How TACT affects carers and what TACT could do differently**

To understand the extent to which carers felt TACT affected them, we asked them to rank perceived effect on a scale of 1 (highly negative effect) to 7 (highly positive effect). We also asked for suggestions of anything TACT could do differently, in particular to help understand any low scores. Most respondents felt TACT had a positive effect on the various aspects of their caring roles and lives. Responses were consistent across different types of carer.

Of the 59 responses to these questions, 81% of carers felt that TACT had an overall positive effect on their ability to provide their children with the support they needed (scores 5 to 7), and half (50%) reported a highly positive effect (score 7). In particular, out of the 20 adoptive parents who answered this question, 15 reported a positive effect.

Similarly, 81% of carers reported TACT having a positive effect on their confidence in caring for their children, with 42% reporting a highly positive effect. Once again, almost three-quarters of adoptive parents felt TACT had a positive impact on their confidence.

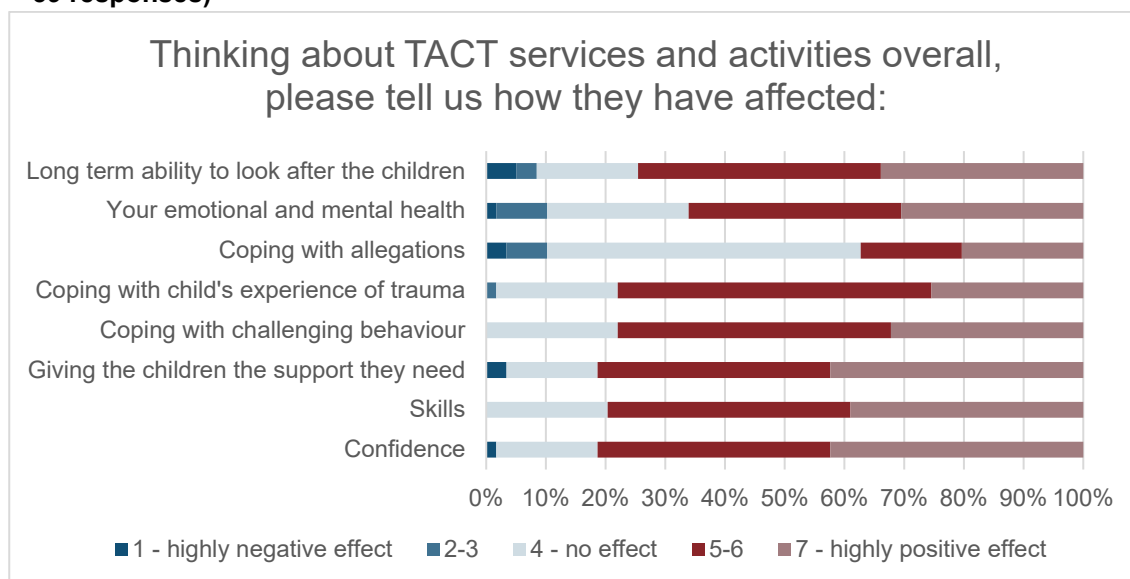
In addition, 80% of respondents reported TACT having an overall positive effect on their skills in caring for their children. Of these, half ranked TACT as having a highly positive effect. Other highly scoring categories include the effect of TACT on the emotional and mental health of carers (66% positive); coping with children's challenging behaviour and coping with children's experiences of trauma (78% positive each).

On the questions relating to carers' health, children's challenging behaviour and coping with children's experiences of trauma, 20 to 24% of respondents reported that TACT had no effect. Similarly, 31 carers reported no effect on coping with allegations made against them by the child(ren), though none of these had used the allegation support service. One carer reported TACT having the most negative effect (score 1). Most respondents who reported no effect had high self-ratings of the relevant measure (for example, all 10 people reporting no effect of TACT on their confidence in caring for the child(ren) had reported feeling above-average confidence in the last month, with 8 reporting feeling very confident) (Figure 3).

Carers were also asked about how TACT affected their future perceptions of their role. Most foster carers (23 out of 39 answering) reported that TACT has a positive effect on their likeliness to care for their child in the long term with only a few expressing a negative view. Most (31 out of 39) said that TACT had a positive effect on their likeliness to continue as a foster carer, and half (20) reported a positive effect on their ability to communicate with the children's birth parents. Similarly, 16 out of 20 adoptive parents also reported TACT as having a positive effect on how prepared they feel caring for the child(ren) in the long term.

There were few negative responses although a noticeable minority of respondents (22%) would not have recommended TACT to other people locally who might be thinking of caring. This was higher among foster carers (9 out of 32 responses) than adoptive parents (3 out of 20 responses). There seemed to be no association between length of time in role (a proxy for experience of pre-TACT service) and likelihood to recommend TACT.

**Figure 3: Perceived effects of engagement with TACT on aspects of respondents' caring (base size = 59 responses)**



Source: NatCen Survey of TACT Parents and Carers, 2019

We then asked respondents what TACT could do differently. Many participants provided positive feedback for TACT. These participants reported being very happy overall with

the services. They particularly complimented TACT's approach to fostering. They reflected on how satisfied they are with the support provided, and how TACT is overall "engaging and helpful" not only for the children, but for the families too.

"They have an open and enthusiastic attitude to personal development and keep the child at the centre of all that they aim to do."

"I think a great job is being done by TACT."

"Some of the changes I suggested last year, were implemented and help greatly. I think a great job is being done by TACT."

One respondent highlighted that TACT are only part of an environment of support for carers that can be complex:

"I think TACT are very good, my problems largely arise with the systems around TACT such as social services and medical advice which is often totally impractical."

There were a range of suggestions about areas where TACT could improve, usually additions to its activities but also some processes. There is overlap with what carers reported under their training needs. Respondents frequently mentioned pay and prioritising social worker support, equality and diversity.

Lots of carers commented on pay as being an area where TACT could improve, it was lower than many feel they should be paid and some called for pay rise reviews. Given the rate of pay, it was suggested that carers should have respite awarded to them in other forms, including a reduction in council tax or an increase in the day care allowance.

"Treat carers as professionals and pay them accordingly."

"Pay us more. We were told that the payments would be more in line with the independent fostering agencies and this has not happened. If we do not use respite then reward us for this. Give us a reduction in council tax. Increase the day care allowance."

Some carers commented on the consistency of pay, suggesting that all carers should get an across the board fee. They also reflected on the disparity of those receiving Christmas allowances. Furthermore, 1 carer questioned why SGOs receive financial support for a short period of time, unlike foster carers who get paid continually. It was suggested that foster carers should be paid in line with other TACT foster carers outside of Peterborough. One participant noted that they were told their pay would be in line with the independent fostering agencies but does not feel this has been fulfilled.

Lastly, it was advised that communication surrounding pay could be clearer.

"Have a clearer outline of SGO payments instead of carers finding out the very difficult way that payments are stopping."

Together with suggestions surrounding pay, issues were identified surrounding the perceived disparity in treatment (including pay) between ‘council TACT’ – those who were employed by PCC prior to the TACT commission – and ‘agency TACT’ – those who were employed through foster carer agencies – as well as social worker retention, workload and appointment-keeping.

“Keeping social worker meetings should be a priority. We were just dropped and let go.”

“They still primarily promote agency rights in contrast to what they offer the original Peterborough carers.”

The participant who was very unsatisfied with TACT highlighted an issue with how carers and adoptive parents are treated. They feel disrespected in their role, and said that TACT should take the time to hear their concerns and act accordingly.

## Impact evaluation

The impact evaluation used data from the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)<sup>7</sup> supplemented by data on looked-after children from the Department for Education<sup>8</sup> and direct from Peterborough City Council. We found no obvious impact of the TACT commission on the indicators and therefore on placement stability, children staying within their families or days overall spent in state care. As noted under the limitations, this was primarily because the variation in the indicator values prior to TACT meant that very large increases or decreases in the 2 years of TACT work would have been needed to allow a robust conclusion of impact.

Most findings comparing indicators for Peterborough in the TACT years (2017/18 and 2018/19) with the previous years of service delivery in Peterborough found no statistically significant difference across the 5 indicators. There was no difference in the number of LAC per 10,000 children, or in the proportion of children looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years who have been in the same placement for at least 2 years. The proportion of children with 3 or more placements in the last year was significantly lower than several previous years in 2017/18 but not in 2018/19. The proportion of care arrangements ceased that was ceased via children returning home was significantly lower in 2018/19 than in several previous years. The proportion ceased via special guardianship order was higher in 2018/19 than in previous years, though the difference was not significant.

Across the 5 impact indicators, Peterborough was broadly consistent with its comparator local authorities. Comparing 2016/17 to the TACT years, change in Peterborough sat in the middle of the distribution of the local authorities compared; the only indicator for

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<sup>7</sup> Department for Education 2019a.

<sup>8</sup> Department for Education 2019b.

which Peterborough was outlying was comparing the proportion of care arrangements ceased via return home (where Peterborough had 33% in 2016/17 and 20% in 2018/19) – but even this difference was not statistically significant. The selected local authorities and Peterborough demonstrated a variety of increase and decrease across the indicators, with no discernible tendency among them. In almost all cases values of impact indicators remained in the range seen among the local authorities in the preceding years.

A summary of the impact evaluation findings is in Appendix 4 and the full impact evaluation findings, with graphs, are in Appendix 5.

## 4. Summary of key findings on 7 practice features and 7 outcomes

As reported in the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Round 1 Final Evaluation Report (2017), evidence from the first round of the Innovation Programme led the Department for Education to identify 7 features of practice and 7 outcomes to explore further in subsequent rounds.<sup>9</sup> Evidence on the 7 practice features and 7 outcomes was due to come primarily through the qualitative work and therefore is more limited than had been hoped.

### Family focus

The quantitative data suggest a reduction in the proportion of care arrangements ceased that are ceased via return home (20% and 21% in the 2 TACT years, down from 33% the previous year). However, it is not clear whether this would be a mark of success or not: it is possible that effective early intervention through family group conferencing could mean more children staying in their families in the first place and not entering the care system, reducing the rate at which children with less complex needs are removed from their families. If those who do still need to enter the care system had a higher average level of need, positive indicators would be harder to achieve.

### Create greater stability for children

The quantitative data suggest no impact of the TACT commission on the proportion of looked-after children with 3 or more moves in the last year, or on those with a placement lasting at least 2 years among those in care for at least 2.5 years.

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<sup>9</sup> Sebba, J., Luke, N., McNeish, D., and Rees, A. (2017) *Children's Social Care Innovation Programme: Final evaluation report*, Department for Education, available [here](#).

## 5. Lessons and implications

The closure of the project means few conclusions can be drawn regarding TACT's service provision, but we can make some observations. While the carer survey did not ask carers directly to compare their experience under TACT with that prior to the commission, there was an opportunity to do so in response to several questions. It was striking that although most respondents had experienced provision in Peterborough before TACT, there was little comparison to that earlier period. This may suggest that the difference was not felt strongly or, while noticed, was too minor to warrant comparison.

We can also note that respondents' perceptions varied as to what counts as 'TACT Peterborough' – from all professionals involved in the service to just the management. For example, views differed on how far TACT is responsible for the actions of social workers. We cannot say for certain the degree to which changes in management are noticed or understood by service users. In contrast to this, there was a perception among some that TACT had a less favourable approach to carers who were employed in Peterborough before TACT took over the commission.

There was clearly widespread satisfaction with TACT's overall offer, particularly its training offer, despite the fact that large proportions of carers were unaware of some activities. There was some dissatisfaction with pay and with different treatment by carer type, but we cannot say whether this was more or less of a concern with regard to TACT's provision than it would have been under other management.

Many forms of support make a difference to carers' ability to care, parts of which were core to TACT's work. The Innovation Programme-funded activities touched on several of these areas of support, largely training but also professional support. Managing to stay calm and be creative, attentive and understanding needs more than just training – these capabilities are affected on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis by factors such as sleep and stress, including the stresses of having little money or being socially isolated. It is important to note that while such factors may not have obviously formed a core part of TACT's remit, TACT's work could and in some cases did address these wider factors, particularly around social activities, pay and social worker support.

On the impact side, the proportion of arrangements ceased that were ceased by SGO may have increased, which would be consistent with TACT's focus on promoting family group conferences and providing more support to special guardians than they had previously had.

We can also reflect on the appropriateness of the evaluation methods. The theory of change and logic modelling provides a connection between the impact and the process components. The impact work captures the overall impacts that were potentially achieved by the project, but cannot identify all the steps by which that impact may be achieved. These interim steps to impact, as understood from the theory of change, would have been captured through the remaining aspects of the process evaluation. Longer

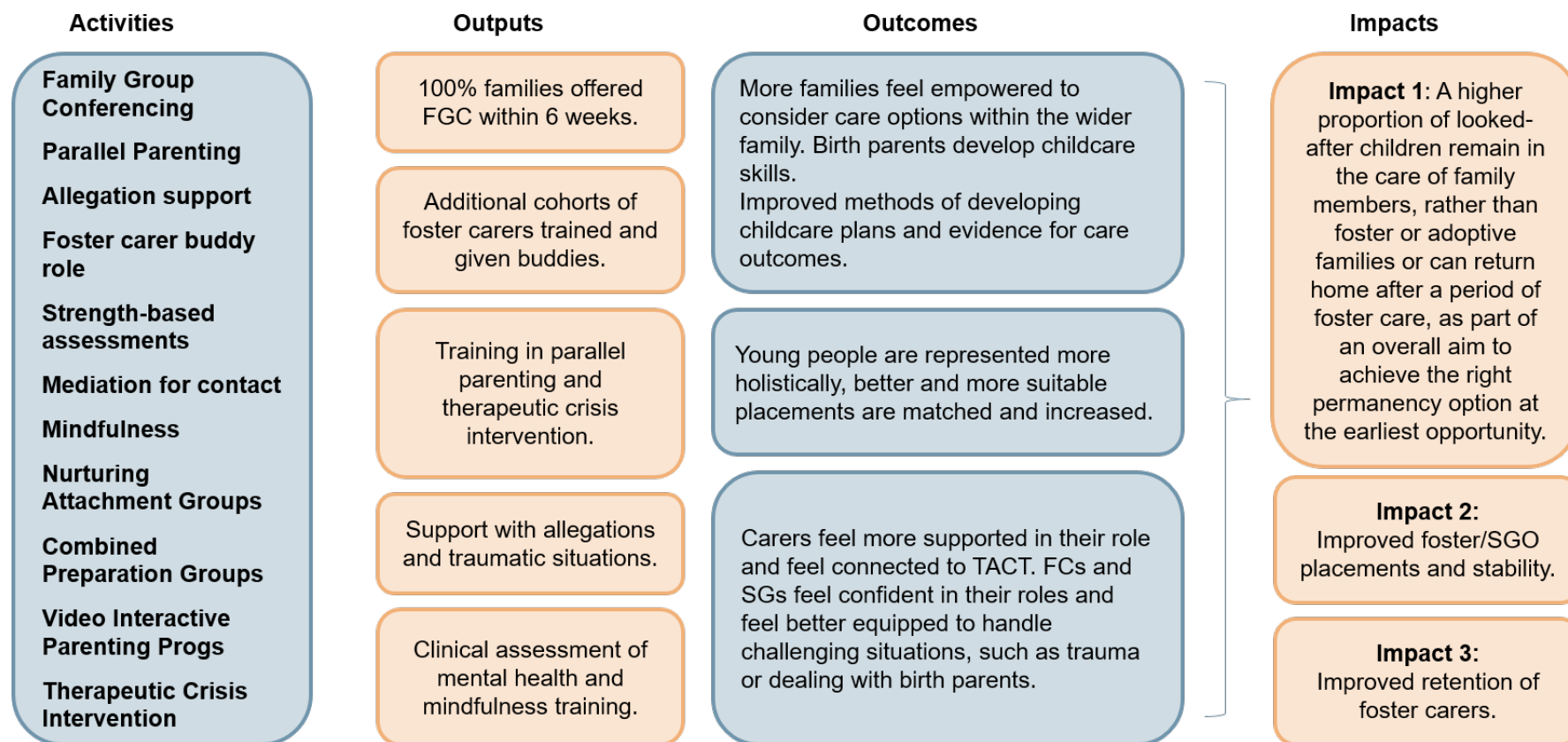


timescales, with more post-intervention data, would also have allowed for a more robust assessment of impact.

## Appendix 1 Project theory of change

In the scoping phase in Autumn 2018 we generated a theory of change focused on the Innovation Programme-funded activities. This involved a theory of change workshop with NatCen evaluators and project staff. This workshop aimed to understand what changes or innovations the TACT initiative is implementing, the planned outputs and outcomes, and wider impacts of the activities.

Figure 4: TACT Peterborough theory of change focused on the Innovation Programme-funded activities



Source: NatCen Social Research

## Appendix 2 Impact evaluation methodology

### Overall approach

This report assesses trends in key annual indicators for looked-after children in Peterborough since TACT took over responsibility for permanency services in April 2017. For example, an important indicator is the proportion of looked-after children who have been in 3 or more placements in the last year. It is difficult to attribute any trends to the new model of service provision given the amount of natural year on year variation there can be in the characteristics of Peterborough's looked-after children, their families and the professionals working with them. However, we can observe whether changes are at least statistically significant and how they compare to local authorities with similar characteristics over the same time period.

For each year on year on year indicator we have tested whether the difference is significant at the 95% level, illustrated using confidence intervals. This is the range in which we would expect observed difference to fall 95% of the time due to natural variation, if there were no real difference. Such tests are affected by the amount of data available impacting on the statistical power of the test: the larger the sample the easier it is to identify whether smaller effects are significant.

We must also consider the nature of TACT's interventions. Not all activities had been fully rolled out and some were focused on placing children who can face the most challenges finding a stable placement. Supporting these children with more complex needs is a priority but one that requires considerable effort without necessarily the same success rates as helping children with fewer needs.

### The proportions we compared

We have made 2 types of comparison. We have compared Peterborough in the TACT year (2016/17 to 2017/18 and 2017/18 to 2018/19) with Peterborough in previous years, and we have compared change in the TACT year in Peterborough with change in that year for other similar local authorities.

Similar local authorities were selected separately for each indicator. Each time we selected the 4 local authorities closest to Peterborough on the median value of the indicator in the years immediately preceding TACT. Ties in the median value were broken by selecting the local authorities with the lowest variance in the indicator over that period (that is, those with the most constant level).

## How we compared proportions

We used the z statistic to calculate confidence intervals around the proportions reported in the indicators, and used these to assess how discernible values for the TACT years were from values for previous years.<sup>10</sup> We then calculated the difference between the TACT years and each previous year and calculated a confidence interval for this difference. The further this difference was from zero and the more the confidence interval sat on one side of zero, the more confident we are that the observed difference between the years or local authorities being compared is a real difference.

## Data sources

Data for indicators 1, 2 and 5 came from the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT).<sup>11</sup> Data for indicators 3 and 4 came from LAIT except for the 2 intervention years (2017/18 and 2018/19) for which they were not available in LAIT. For those years we took these data from Department for Education reports on children looked after in England.<sup>12</sup>

## Years for which we have data

We have data for 2 years of Peterborough TACT service delivery (2017/18 and 2018/19). We used as many pre-TACT years as were available for each analysis, which varied between indicators: for indicators 1, 2 and 5 data went back to 2008/09, while for indicators 3 and 4 data went back to 2010/11.

## Dealing with rounded data

For some indicators for comparator local authorities, the numerator data for the proportion, reported in LAIT, is rounded to the nearest 5. As accurate confidence intervals depend on the number of cases in question, we conducted sensitivity analyses to determine what effect, if any, the rounding would have on our conclusions. We found that the rounding would have no practical effect on our findings, and present data based on the rounded figures in the findings below.

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<sup>10</sup> We followed the advice of Kirkwood and Sterne (2003) that “The normal distribution is a reasonable approximation to the sampling distribution of the difference  $p_1 - p_0$ , provided  $n_1p_1$ ,  $n_1 - n_1p_1$ ,  $n_0p_0$  and  $n_0 - n_0p_0$  are each greater than 10.” (p. 151).

<sup>11</sup> DfE 2019a, 20 December 2019 update. See Appendix 4 for details of indicators.

<sup>12</sup> DfE 2019b, Children looked after in England including adoption: 2018 to 2019.

## Appendix 3 Carer survey questionnaire

### NatCen TACT Parents and Carers Questionnaire May 2019

Hello, and thank you for answering this questionnaire about TACT and how it works with parents and carers in Peterborough.

NatCen is an independent research organisation which has been hired by the Department for Education (DfE) because it funds some of the work TACT does. Your answers are only visible to us. TACT and the DfE will not know that you have responded nor what you say.

The survey is a key part of a wider evaluation assessing how TACT is working in Peterborough. As a parent or carer supported by TACT your input is the most important part of that.

**First, we are going to ask a few questions about you.**

1) Please select your role:

If you have multiple roles, please select the one which relates to your most recent contact with TACT.

- a) Foster carer
- b) Special guardian or Kinship carer with a Special Guardian Order
- c) Adoptive parent
- d) Other kinship carer or family and friends foster carer

2) How long have you been in this parenting or caring role?

- a) Less than 1 year
- b) 1 to 3 years
- c) 4 to 7 years
- d) 8 to 10 years
- e) Over 10 years

3) How many children are in your care currently? (Including birth children, adopted children and children you look after)

- a) 1
- b) 2 to 3
- c) 4 to 5
- d) 6+

- 4) Do you have a paid role outside of the home?  
 a) Yes  
 b) No

**We are now going to ask a few questions about your role as parent/carer to the child(ren) you have adopted or foster. Please remember that you will not be identified from any of your answers – TACT and DfE will not know who has answered the questions and NatCen will not identify you.**

**For each question, please focus on your experiences in the last month.**

- 5) Over the last month, how confident have you felt as a parent or carer to the child(ren)?

Not confident		Somewhat confident			Very confident	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- 6) Over the last month, how skilled have you felt as a parent or carer to the child(ren)?

Low skilled		Average skill level			Highly skilled	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- 7) Over the last month, how well do you feel you have supported the child(ren)?

Poorly		Average			Well	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Over the last month, how well supported have you felt in parenting or caring for the child(ren)?

Poorly		Average			Well	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- 9) Over the last month, how well have you dealt with challenging behaviour from the child(ren)?

Poorly		Average			Well	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- 10) If relevant, how well have you dealt with trauma experienced by the child(ren)?

Poorly			Average			Well
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11) In your opinion, what makes the most difference to your ability to care for the child(ren)?

12) Please tell us any ways in which you would like to develop your skills as a parent or carer.

13) How many close friends or relatives do you have, people that you feel at ease with, who you can talk to about private matters?

- a) None
- b) 1 or 2
- c) 3 to 5
- d) 6 to 9
- e) 10 or more
- f) Unknown

**We now have a few questions about your contact with TACT and use of their activities and services.**

14) How often do you have contact or involvement with any TACT staff, services or activities?

- a) More than once a week
- b) Once a week
- c) Two or three times a month
- d) Once a month
- e) Every other month
- f) Less than four or five times a year

15) Does the frequency of your involvement with TACT meet your needs?

- a) Yes, it's about right
- b) No, it's not enough
- c) No, it's too often

16) What are some of the reasons you contact TACT?

**We want to know how well some of TACT’s services are known of or used.**

17) For each of the services listed below, please tick one column to show if you have heard of it or not and whether or not you have used it:

	<b>Used it</b>	<b>Heard of it but not used</b>	<b>Not heard of it</b>
Family group conferencing (FGC)			
Parallel parenting			
Allegation support			
Foster carer buddy (buddies’ scheme)			
Strengths-based assessments (profiles)			
Mediation for contact with birth parents			
Mindfulness			
Nurturing Attachment Groups			
Video Interactive Parenting programme			
Therapeutic crisis intervention			

18) Out of the TACT services you have used, please select those you think are the most useful for both yourself, and the child(ren) you care for.

If you did not find the service useful, or you have not used it, please skip.

	<b>Most useful</b>	<b>Did not use or not useful</b>
Family group conferencing (FGC)		
Parallel parenting		
Allegation support		



Foster carer buddy (buddies' scheme)		
Strengths-based assessments (profiles)		
Mediation for contact with birth parents		
Mindfulness		
Nurturing Attachment Groups		
Video Interactive Parenting programme		
Therapeutic crisis intervention		

19) Thinking about the TACT services which you have not used, please select any that you are interested in using.

	<b>Interested in using</b>	<b>Not interested or not applicable to me</b>
Family group conferencing (FGC)		
Parallel parenting		
Allegation support		
Foster carer buddy (buddies' scheme)		
Strengths-based assessments (profiles)		
Mediation for contact with birth parents		
Mindfulness		
Nurturing Attachment Groups		
Video Interactive Parenting programme		
Therapeutic crisis intervention		

20) Please explain why you haven't used the activities that you are interested in.

**Now we are going to ask about the effects that TACT has had on you in your role as parent or carer to the child(ren) you have adopted or foster. If a question does not apply to you, please leave it blank.**

21) Thinking about TACT services and activities overall, please tell us how they have affected...

	<b>Negative effect</b>			<b>No effect</b>		<b>Positive effect</b>	
... your confidence in caring for the child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... your skills in caring for the child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... your ability to give the child(ren) the support they need	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... your ability to cope with challenging behaviour from the child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... your ability to cope with the child(ren)'s experiences of trauma	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... your ability to cope with allegations made against you by the child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... your emotional and mental health	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>For foster carers:</b>							
... how likely it is that you will look after the child(ren) over the longer term	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... how likely it is that you will continue as a foster carer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... your ability to engage with the child(ren)'s birth parents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>For special guardians and for kinship carers:</b>							
... how well-prepared you are to look after the child(ren) over the longer term	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... your ability to engage with the child(ren)'s birth parents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>For adoptive parents:</b>							
... how well-prepared you are for parenting the child(ren) in the longer term	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**We have two final questions relating to your experience of TACT.**

22) Is there anything you think TACT should do differently? If so, please explain what.

23) Would you recommend TACT to other people locally who might be thinking of caring for or adopting children?

- a. Yes
- b. No

## Appendix 4 Summary of impact evaluation findings

Indicator	Meaning	Findings for 2017/18 and 2018/19	Interpretation
1. Placement 1 (proportion with 3 or more placements in last year)	Lower suggests greater stability	<b>In Peterborough:</b> 2017/18 significantly lower than 3 previous years; 2018/19 within previous range; overall plausibly within natural variation. <b>Compared to other LAs:</b> Biggest decrease in 2017/18 (though not significant). Increased in 2018/19 to similar to other local authorities.	Inconclusive, no obvious impact of TACT commission.
2. Placement 2 (proportion in same placement for 2+ years)	Higher suggests greater stability	<b>In Peterborough:</b> Virtually no difference compared to any of the 7 years prior. <b>Compared to other LAs:</b> Increase and then larger decrease but other local authorities had larger decreases in 2018/19.	The indicator records placements stable for 2+ years, so TACT's early-intervention activities will not have affected 2017/18. No obvious impact of TACT commission.
3. Care arrangements ceased via SGO	Higher suggests more children staying in family	<b>In Peterborough:</b> Notable, borderline-significant increase in 2018/19. <b>Compared to other LAs:</b> Biggest increase in Peterborough 2017/18 to 2018/19.	Possible impact in second year on the proportion of care arrangements ceased that are ceased via SGO.
4. Care arrangements ceased via return home	Higher suggests more children staying in family	<b>In Peterborough:</b> Fallen to and remained at its lowest level since 2010, significantly lower than 4 previous years; substantial variation in previous years. <b>Compared to other LAs:</b> Large and statistically significant decrease in 2017/18, the same as in 1 comparator local authority. In 2018/19 Peterborough very similar to other local authorities.	Inconclusive but probably lower number of returns home. Driven by decrease in children going to parents or relatives. No increase in the proportion of adoptions or children leaving to live independently.
5. LAC per 10,000	Lower suggests less use of state care	<b>In Peterborough:</b> Very consistent with previous 9 years, and in the middle of the range. <b>Compared to other LAs:</b> No change; in the middle of the distribution of comparator local authorities.	Stable and consistent with comparable trends.

# Appendix 5 Full impact evaluation findings

## Indicator 1: Placement 1

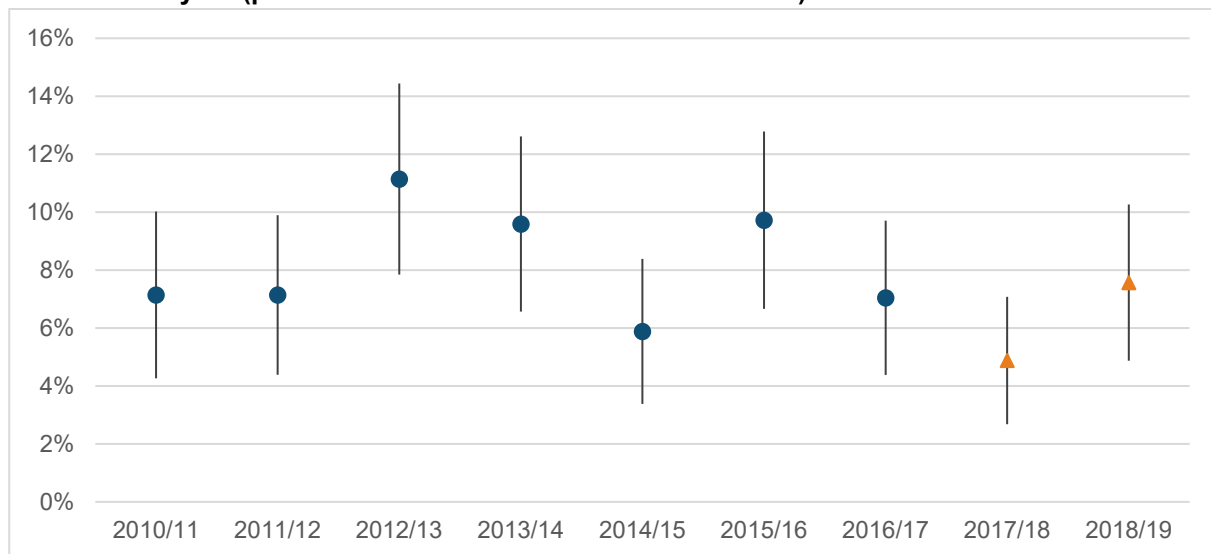
**Numerator:** The number of children with 3 or more placements in the last year  
**Denominator:** All children in care

Fewer children with 3 or more placements in the last year is a sign of greater stability. In the first year of the TACT commission, 2017/18, there were 369 children in care in Peterborough. Of these, 5% (18 children) had 3 or more placements during the year. In the second year, the proportion was 8% (28/370).

### Change within Peterborough

The 5% figure in 2017/18 was lower than any of the previous years from 2010/11 to 2016/17 in Peterborough, and less than half the 11% figure in 2012/13. The value for 2018/19 was back within the range seen previously but remained several percentage points lower than in 2012/13, 2013/4 and 2015/16 (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Placement 1, the proportion of looked-after children in Peterborough with 3 or more moves in the year (point estimate and 95% confidence interval)**



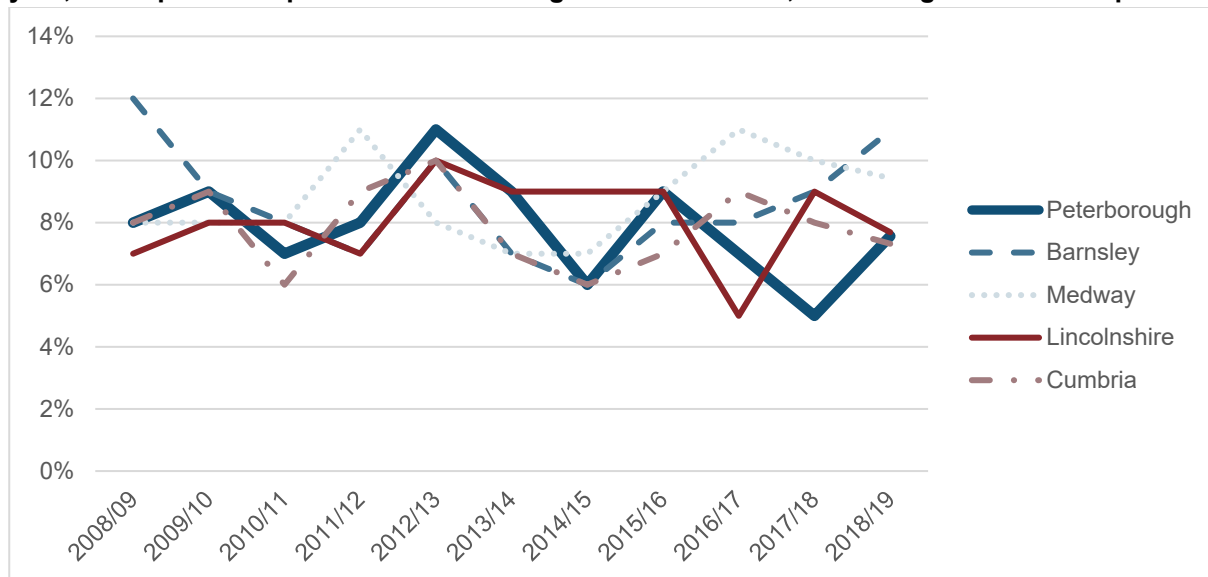
Source: NatCen analysis of data from LAIT

### Comparing Peterborough with similar LAs

The 4 local authorities most similar to Peterborough in the proportion of looked-after children with 3 or more placements in the years, 2008/09 to 2016/17 (before the TACT commission) were Cumbria, Lincolnshire, Medway and Barnsley. Compared to these local authorities, Peterborough had a larger fall in the proportion of looked-after children with 3 or more placements during the TACT year 2016/17 to 2017/18 (from 7% to 5%)

and a larger rise in the following year, remaining within the range of the other local authorities (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Trends in the proportion of looked-after children with 3 or more placements in the last year, in the pre-TACT period in Peterborough and similar LAs, and change in the TACT period**



Source: NatCen analysis of data from LAIT

## Indicator 2: Placement 2

**Numerator:** The number of children in 1 placement, or in 1 placement followed by adoption, for at least 2 years

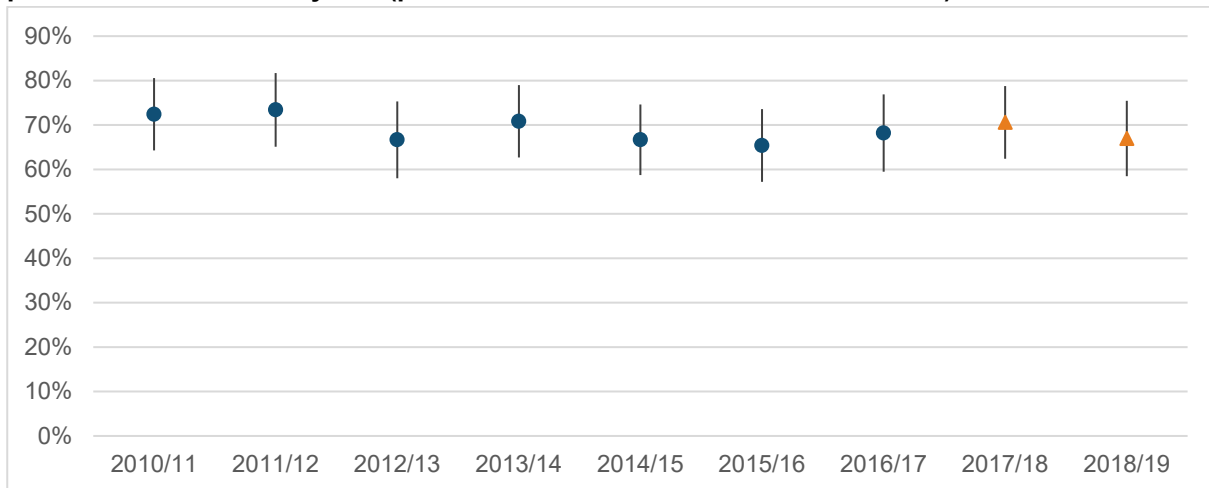
**Denominator:** All children looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years and aged under 16

More children in 1 placement in the last year is a sign of greater stability. In the first year of the TACT commission there were 119 children looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years and aged under 16 in Peterborough. Of these, 71% (84 children) had been in the same placement for at least 2 years. In the second year, the proportion was 67% (79/118).

### Change within Peterborough

The proportion of children who have been in the same placement for at least 2 years has been very stable in Peterborough, ranging from 65% in 2015/16 to 73% in 2011/12. The values for the TACT years are within this range (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Placement 2, the proportion of looked-after children in Peterborough in the same placement for at least 2 years (point estimate and 95% confidence interval)**

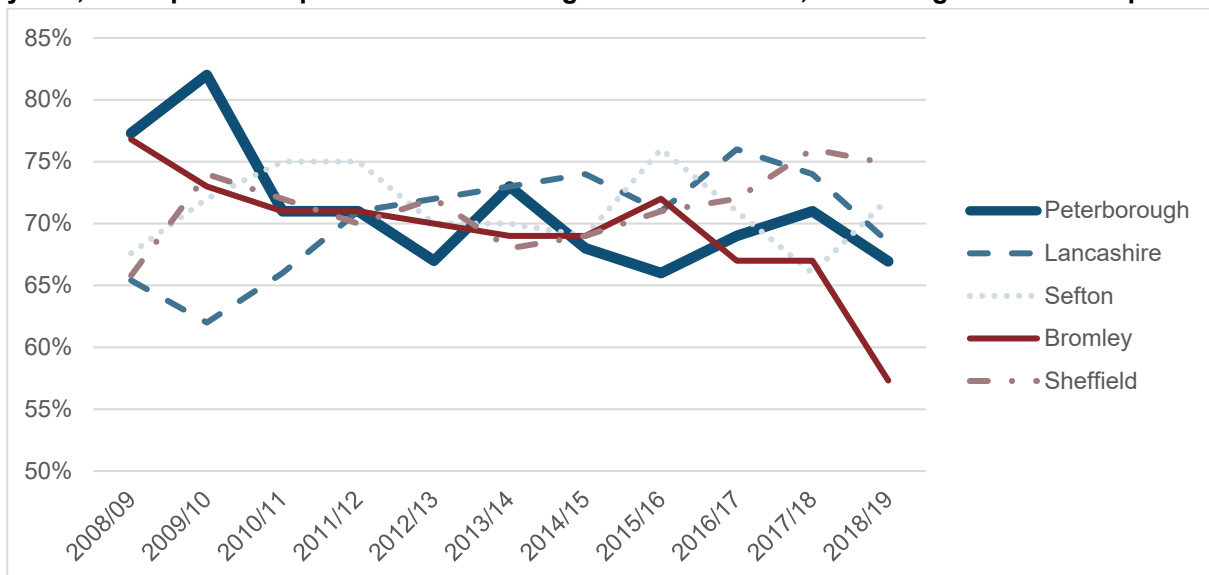


Source: NatCen analysis of data from LAIT

## Comparing Peterborough with similar LAs

The 4 local authorities that were similar to Peterborough in the proportion of looked-after children in the same placement for at least 2 years for the pre-TACT period 2008/09 to 2016/17 were Sheffield, Bromley, Sefton and Lancashire. Aside from a large fall in Bromley in 2018/19, there were no significant changes across local authorities in the TACT years (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Trends in the proportion of looked-after children in the same placement for at least 2 years, in the pre-TACT period in Peterborough and similar LAs, and change in the TACT period**



Source: NatCen analysis of data from LAIT

### Indicator 3: Special guardianship orders

**Numerator: Number of children taking up a special guardianship order<sup>13</sup>**

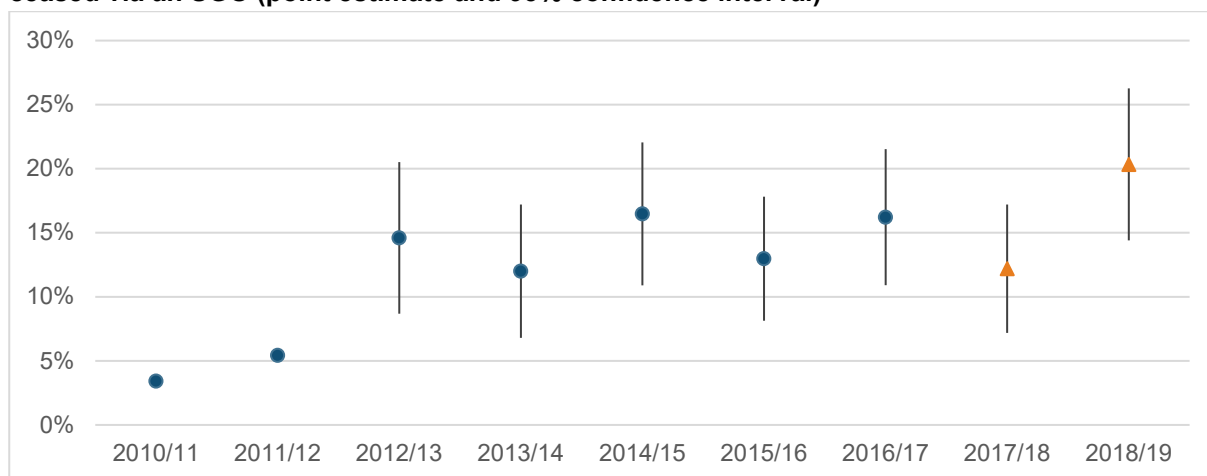
**Denominator: All children ceasing to be looked after**

There is no target for the proportion of SGOs among all endings of care arrangements, and the aim is to achieve the right permanency option at the earliest opportunity. Nevertheless, promoting SGO care is part of TACT’s particular approach and an increase in SGO usage would be consistent with their approach. In the first year of the TACT commission, care arrangements for 164 children were ceased in Peterborough. Of these, 12% (20 children) were ceased via an SGO. In the second year, the proportion was 20% (36/177).

#### Change within Peterborough

The 12% figure in 2017/18 was almost identical to 2 of the previous 5 years in Peterborough, and slightly lower than 3 years in which the proportion was 15 to 16%. The 20% in 2018/19 was notably higher (though the difference was not statistically significant) and could reflect an increased focus on SGO under TACT (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Ceased by SGO: the proportion of LAC arrangements ceased in Peterborough that were ceased via an SGO (point estimate and 95% confidence interval)<sup>14</sup>**



Source: NatCen analysis of data from PCC

#### Comparing Peterborough with similar LAs

The 4 local authorities most similar to Peterborough in the proportion of LAC arrangements ceased by SGO in the pre-TACT period 2012/13 to 2016/17 were Poole,

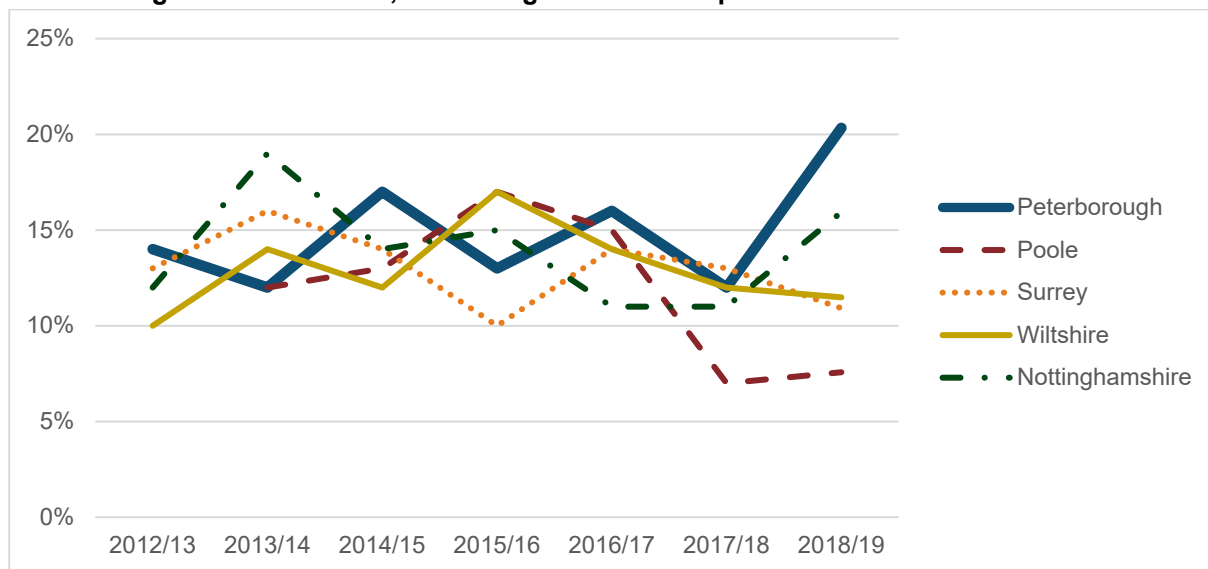
<sup>13</sup> Includes orders made to former foster carers and orders made to other carers.

<sup>14</sup> Confidence intervals are not given for 2010/11 and 2011/12 as there were too few SGOs in those years to allow them to be validly calculated.



Surrey, Wiltshire and Nottinghamshire. The increase from 12% to 20% in Peterborough in 2018/19 put the proportion in Peterborough higher than in any year for any comparator LA (Figure 10).<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 10: Trends in the proportion of LAC arrangements ceased by SGO, in the pre-TACT period in Peterborough and similar LAs, and change in the TACT period**



Source: NatCen analysis of data from LAIT, DfE/ONS and PCC

## Indicator 4: Returning home

**Numerator: Number of children returning home<sup>16</sup>**

**Denominator: All children ceasing to be looked after**

As with special guardianship orders, there is no goal for the proportion of care arrangements that are ended via the child returning home. Early engagement with families and supporting for parenting skills is part of TACT’s particular approach and an increase in children returning home as the right permanency option would be consistent with their approach. In the first year of the TACT commission, 2017/18, care arrangements for 164 children were ceased in Peterborough. Of these, 21% (34 children) were ceased via the child returning home. In the second year the proportion was 20% (35/177).

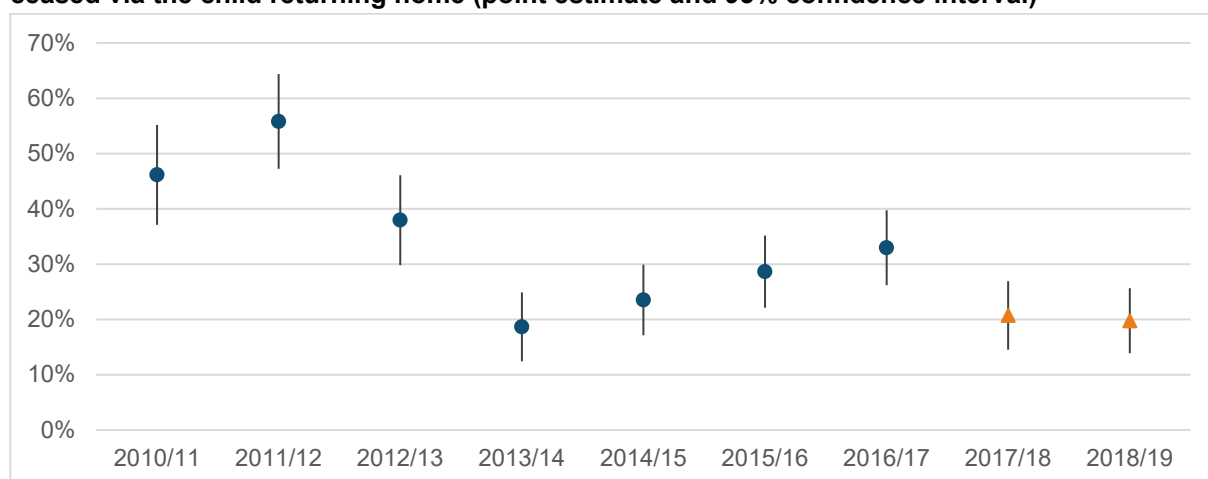
<sup>15</sup> Data for 2016/17 to 2017/18 and 2017/18 to 2018/19, were not available in LAIT (20 December 2019 update, DfE 2019) and have been taken from DfE (2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2019b) for comparator local authorities and from PCC for Peterborough.

<sup>16</sup> Includes children who returned home to live with parents or relatives as part of care planning process or not as part of a care planning process, and children who ceased to live with parents or relatives without parental responsibility.

## Change within Peterborough

From 2010/11 to 2017/18 there was large variation in the proportion of LAC arrangements that were ceased via the child returning home, falling markedly from 56% in 2011/12 to 19% by 2013/14. Since then rates rose gradually to 33% in 2016/17 before falling back again to 20 to 21% in the TACT years (Figure 11). Data from DfE and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (DfE 2017a, 2017b, 2018) show that the decrease from 2016/17 to 2017/18 was driven by a fall in the proportion of children who returned home to live with parents or relatives (with or without a care plan). It was not due to changes in the proportion of care arrangements ceased through adoption or independent living, which remained level. There was no significant difference between the TACT years and the years 2013/14 through to 2015/16 but the proportions of children returning home in the other years was significantly higher than in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

**Figure 11: Returning home, the proportion of LAC arrangements ceased in Peterborough that were ceased via the child returning home (point estimate and 95% confidence interval)**



Source: NatCen analysis of data from PCC

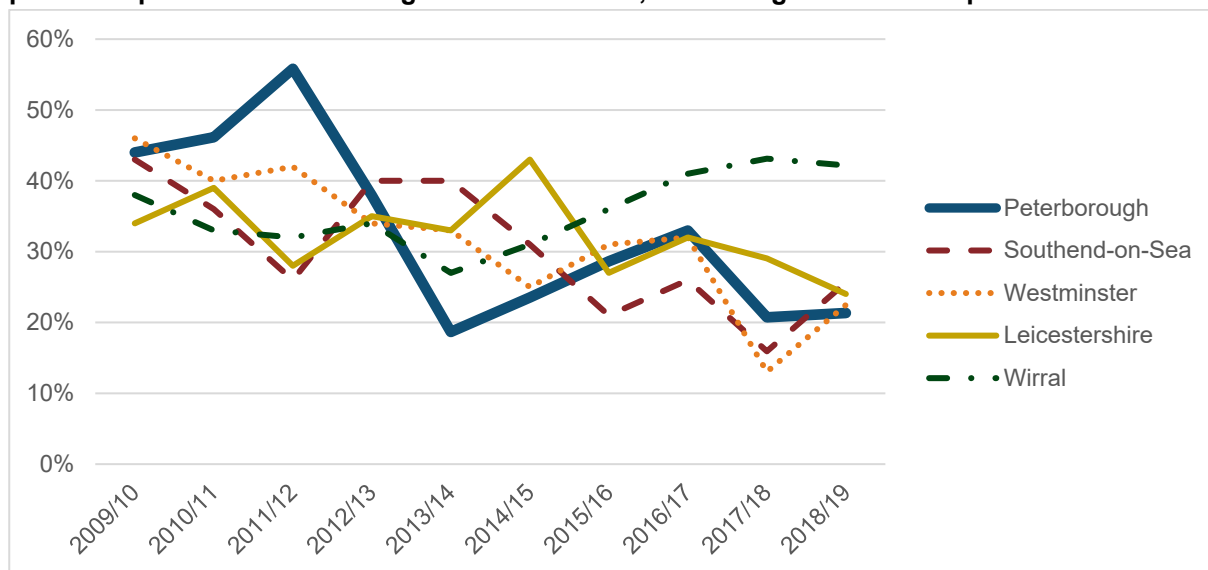
## Comparing Peterborough with similar LAs

The 4 local authorities most similar to Peterborough in the proportion of LAC arrangements ceased by LAC returning home in the pre-TACT period 2009/10 to 2016/17 were Wirral, Leicestershire, Westminster and Southend-on-Sea. The overall change in the last 2 years was greater in Peterborough than in other local authorities but the difference was not significant and Peterborough remained at a similar level to most of the other authorities (Figure 12).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Data for the TACT years, 2016/17 to 2018/19, were not available in LAIT and have been taken from DfE (2017a, 2017b, 2018).

**Figure 12: Trends in the proportion of LAC arrangements ceased by LAC returning home, in the pre-TACT period in Peterborough and similar LAs, and change in the TACT period**



Source: NatCen analysis of data from LAIT, DfE/ONS and PCC

## Indicator 5: Rate of children being looked after

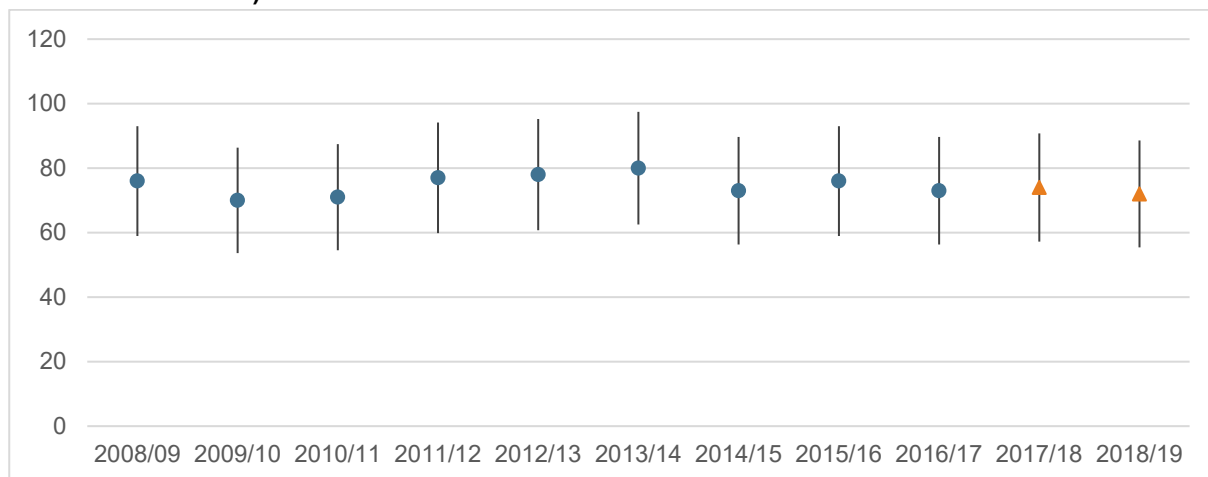
### Looked-after children per 10,000 children in the local authority

There is no target for the number of looked-after children in the local authority, but TACT's work emphasises keeping children in their families and a decrease in the rate of looked-after children would be consistent with this approach. In the first year of the TACT commission, 2017/18, 74 out of every 10,000 children in Peterborough were looked after, and in the second year this figure was 72 per 10,000.

### Change within Peterborough

From 2008/09 to 2018/19 the rate of children being looked after was very consistent, ranging between 70 per 10,000 in 2009/10 and 80 per 10,000 in 2013/14. The 74 and 72 per 10,000 in 2017/18 and 2018/19 were in the middle of this range (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: The number of LAC per 10,000 children in Peterborough (point estimate and 95% confidence interval)**

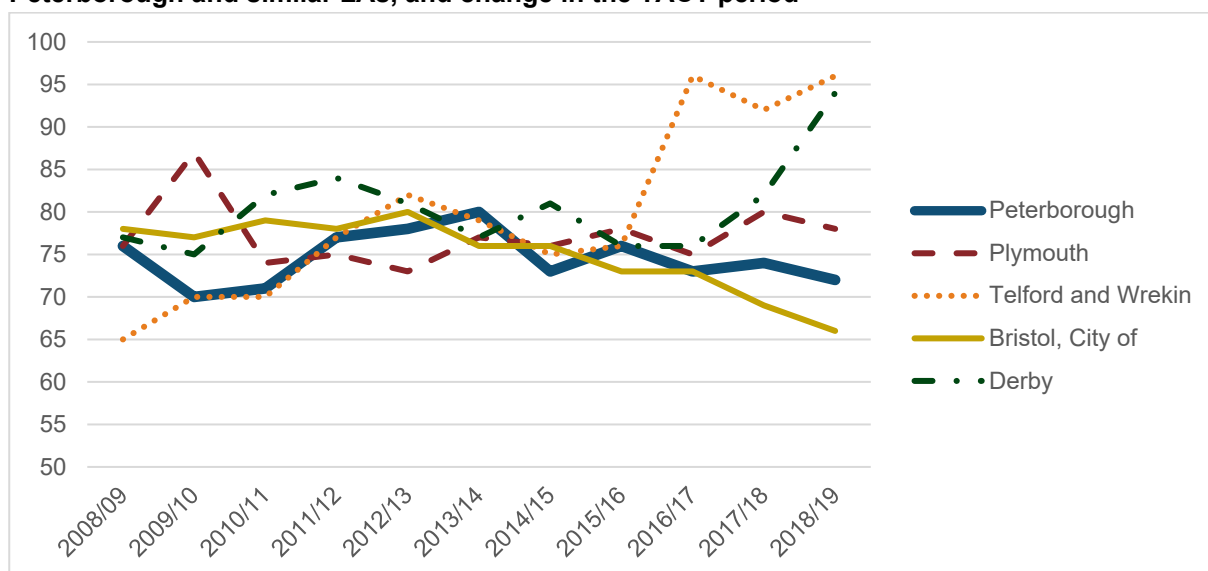


Source: NatCen analysis of data from LAIT

## Comparing Peterborough with similar LAs

The 4 local authorities most similar to Peterborough in the rate of looked-after children for the pre-TACT period 2008/09 to 2016/17 were Plymouth, Telford and Wrekin, City of Bristol and Derby. During the last 2 years the rate of children being looked after stayed stable in Peterborough and Plymouth, and in Telford and Wrekin after a large rise, fell slightly in City of Bristol and increased substantially in Derby (Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Trends in the number of LAC per 10,000 children, in the pre-TACT period in Peterborough and similar LAs, and change in the TACT period**



Source: NatCen analysis of data from LAIT

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**Reference: RR1051**

**ISBN: 978-1-83870-164-2**

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